

Message Text

SECRET

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AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

S E C R E T QUITO 1004

STADIS

EXDIS

FOR HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI EC
SUBJ: ARMS SALES POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA

REF: STATE 031098

1. I HAVE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS TO MY STAFF THAT THEY ARE NOT TO INITIATE ANY DISCUSSION OF THE F-5 WITH THE GOE OR ENCOURAGE THE NOTION THAT WE WOULD BE WILLING TO PROVIDE IT IF THE ECUADOREANS RAISE THE SUBJECT.
2. AT THE SAME TIME, AND WITH THE PRESENT CASE IN ECUADOR PARTICULARLY IN MIND, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE DEPARTMENT MY OWN VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT OF ARMS TRANSFER POLICY OF LATIN AMERICA, AS THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW GUIDELINES ON THIS

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DIFFICULT ISSUE ARE BEING PREPARED. WITH OVER TWENTY YEARS OF LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, I HOPE MY PROFERRING OF SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT WILL NOT APPEAR PRESUMPTUOUS OR IMMODEST.

3. FOR TWO DECADES FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, THE UNITED STATES WAS ABLE TO CONTROL THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF

WEAPONS INTRODUCED INTO LATIN AMERICA BY VIRTUE ON BOTH OUR PRE-DOMINANT POSITION IN THE MANUFACTURE OF ARMS AND THE POLITICAL HEGEMONY WE ENJOYED IN THIS REGION. SINCE THE LATE 1960'S OUR POSITION ON BOTH COUNTS HAS BEEN ERODED SUBSTANTIALLY. THE FIRST BREAKTHROUGH (OTHER THAN CUBA, A RATHER SPECIAL CASE) WAS IN 1968 WHEN THE PERUVIANS DEFIED OUR ATTEMPTS TO PREVENT THEM FROM ACQUIRING SUPERSONIC AIRCRAFT, AND AFTER HAVING BEEN THWARTED ON THE F-", PURCHASED MIRAGES. IN THE FIVE YEARS FOLLOWING THAT LANDMARK EVENT, SOMETHING LIKE 80 PERCENT OF LATIN AMERICA'S PURCHASES OF MAJOR ARMAMENTS WERE FROM SUPPLIERS OTHER THAN THE U.S. THUS WE ARE NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO PREVENT THE INTRODUCTION OF CERTAIN TYPES OF ARMS INTO THE AREA. WE CAN, HOWEVER STILL INFLUENCE THE SITUATION, DEPENDING ON OUR ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO OFFER ALTERNATIVE WEAPON SYSTEMS WHICH ARE LES SSOPHISTICATED THAN THOSE FROM OTHER SOURCES.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, HISTORIC RIVALRIES AND REVANCHIST SENTIMENTS WHICH WERE MUTED BY THE PAX AMERICANA OF THE POSTWAR DECADES HAVE ONCE AGAIN COME TO THE FORE, AS THE RESULT OF HEIGHTENED NATIONALISM, THE INCREASED ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF MANY OF THESE COUNTRIES, THE GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE OF THE MILITARY INSTITUTION IDENTIFYING ITSELF WITH BROAD NATIONAL GOALS, AND A PERCEPTION THAT THE UMXS. IS NO LONGER WILLING TO ACT AS THE REGIONAL GENDARME. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, THE MILITARY, BACKED BY PUBLIC OPINION, FEEL A STRONG RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSURING THAT THEY POSSESS A CREDIBLE DEFENSE AGAINST NEIGHBORING RIVALS.

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5. IN THIS SUB-REGUON, THERE IS THE ADDITIONAL FACT THAT THE TRADITIONAL POWER BALANCE BETWEEN CHILE AND PERU HAS RECENTLY BEEN REVERSED IN THE LATTER'S FAVOR, WHICH IN TURN INCREASES ECUADOR'S SENSE OF VULNERABILITY TO THE COUNTRY THAT, IN THE LIFETIME OF THE PRESENT GENERATION OF ECUADOREAN LEADERS, DESPOILED THEIR NATION OF ONE-THIRD OF ITS TERRITORY. ECUADOREANS IN ALL WALKS AND LEVELS OF LIFE ARE CONVINCED THAT, GIVEN HALF A CHANCE PERU WOULD GRAB MORE OF THEIR TERRITORY, PARTICULARLY THE EASTERN OILFIELDS. ECUADOREANS THUS FIRMLY BELIEVE THEY HAVE THE RIGHT AND THE OBLIGATION TO ACQUIRE A MINIMAL DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY, WHICH THEY NOW SORELY LACK.

6. THE LATIN AMERICAN MILITARY-AGAIN WITH THE BACKING OF PUBLIC OPION--CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES, AS THE TRADITIONAL DOMINANT POWER IN THE AREA, HAS ASSUMED SPECIAL PEROGATIVES AND THEREFORE HAS SPECIAL OBLIGATIONS IN THE REGIBN.

IN THEIR VIEW IT FOLLOWS THAT THE U.S. HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE WEAPONS THEY NEED FOR LEGITIMATE SELF-DEFENSE, JUST AS MOST LATINS BELIEVE WE HAVE A DUTY TO PROVIDE PUBLIC CAPITAL AND TRADE BENEFITS IN AN AREA WHERE WE ENJOY A SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT AND COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE. IN REFUSING TO SELL CERTAIN WEAPONS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY ARE TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR THESE COUNTRIES, WE ARE VIEWED AS SHIRKING OUR RESPONSIBILITY. AT THE SAME TIME, AND EVEN PARADOXICALLY (GIVEN THEIR BELIEF THAT WE HAVE PATERNAL-LIKE OBLIGATIONS FOR THEIR SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT), THE LATIN AMERICANS STRONGLY RESENT OUR ASSUMPTION THAT WE KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR THEM, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE LOUDLY PROCLAIM AN END TO PATERNALISM AND A DESIRE TO TREAT THEM AS EQUALS.

7. WE ARE NOW FACED WITH A SITUATION IN WHICH OUR
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UNILATERAL EFFORTS TO DENY MODERN ARMS TO LATIN AMERICA, IF CARRIED TO THE EXTREME, WILL (A) NOT PREVENT THE LATINS FROM ACQUIRING SUCH ARMS (USUALLY MORE SOPHISTICATED AND THUS MORE EXPENSIVE ONES) AND (B) COST US DEARLY IN TERMS OF THE ATTITUDES OF LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS AND THEIR PUBLIC TOWARD THE UNITED STATES--WHICH IN TURN WILL MAKE IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS IN THESE COUNTRIES.

8. I AM, INCIDENTALLY, WELL AWARE OF THE STRONG SENTIMENT AMONG CERTAIN SECTORS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES THAT THERE IS SOMETHING AMORAL, IF NOT IMMORAL, ABOUT THE U.S. POSITION AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ARMS SUPPLIER. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO THAT SENTIMENT, SINCE IT REFLECTS DEEPLY-ROOTED AND DEEP SEATED VALUES. BUT I ALSO BELIEVE THAT LATIN AMERICA IS NOT THE LOCUS OF THE PROBLEM. THE U.S. IS NOT THE MAJOR ARMS MERCHANT IN THE AREA, THE REGION'S EXPENDITURES ON ARMS RELATIVE TO ITS RESOURCES ARE STILL AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD, AND THE CONTINUING PRESSING NEEDS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ARE LIKELY TO KEEP IT THAT WAY. IF WE WISH TO PRACTICE RESTRAINT IN OUR ARMS POLICY, CERTAINLY THE PERSIAN GULF AND ASIA ARE THE OBVIOUS CANDIDATES. INDEED, THERE NEEDS TO BE SOME RELAXATION OF OUR TRADITIONAL POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA, IF WE ARE NOT TO BE SEEN AS BEING UTTERLY UNCOMPREHENDING AND INDIFFERENT TO THE LEGITIMATE SECURITY NEEDS OF THESE COUNTRIES.

9. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT WE SHOULD LET DOWN THE BARS COMPLETELY AND BE WILLING TO SELL ALL MANNER OF ADVANCED WEAPONRY IN THE REGION. BUT IT DOES MEAN THAT OUR POLICY

MUST NOT ONLY BE RESTRAINED OUT ALSO REASONABLE. IF, FOR
EXAMPLE, WE ARE NOT WILLING TO SELL THE N-4 PHANTOM, WE
SHOULD BE WILLING TO OFFER A LESS-SOPHISTICATED, CHEAPER
SUBSTITUTE, LIKE THE F-5. IF WE DO NOT WISH TO ACQUIESCE
IN THE PURCHASE BY THE LATINS OF EXPENSIVE FRIGATE

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SHIPS, WE SHOULD BE WILLING TO PROVIDE AGING DESTROYERS
AS THEY ARE PHASED OUT OF THE U.S. FLEET. UNLESS, OF
COURSE, WE ARE WILLING TO SEE THE ALIENATION OF LATIN
AMERICAN LEADERS FROM THE U.S. OF WHICH I SPOKE EARLIER
AND INCREASING NUMBERS OF MIRAGES, JAGUARS, SU-22S,
ROALFD MISSILES, ETC., IN THE HANDS OF THE LATINS.

10. IN ESSENCE, THE PROBLEM OF RESTRAINING ARMS
ACQUISITIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AT THE PRESENT TIME
BRINGS US FACE TO FACE WITH THE BASIC PROBLEM OF CONVINCING
OTHER SUPPLIERS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT ALONG WITH US. WE
CANNOT RESTRAIN ACQUISITIONS WITHOUT THE ACTIVE COOPERATION
OF THE FRENCH, BRITISH, WEST GERMANS, RUSSIANS AND OTHERS.
INSTEAD, WE WILL SIMPLY LOSE POLITICAL LEVERAGE, INFLUENCE
OVER THE USE OF ARMS, AND GOODWILL, WHILE MAKING NO IMPACT
ON THE BASIC PROBLEM.

BLOOMFIELD

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